

ELIZABETH COOPER  
A COMEDY BY  
GEORGE MOORE

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ELIZABETH COOPER



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A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS  
BY GEORGE MOORE

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*The first performance of this play was given at  
the Haymarket Theatre, June 22, 1913, by the  
Incorporated Stage Society*

## PERSONS IN THE PLAY

|                        |                  |
|------------------------|------------------|
| MARTIN                 | EDITH EVANS      |
| SEBASTIAN DAYNE        | REGINALD OWEN    |
| MRS. DAYNE             | EMILY LUCK       |
| LADY THURLOW           | JOY CHATWYN      |
| LEWIS DAVENANT         | C. V. FRANCE     |
| GODBY                  | KENYON MUSGRAVE  |
| COUNTESS VON HOENSTADT | MIRIAM LEWES     |
| FLETCHER               | CHARLES MAUNSELL |
| LORD THURLOW           | VAL CUTHBERT     |
| PROFESSOR DAYNE        | GEDGE TWYMAN     |
| LADY KINGSWEIGHT       | NOEL MACKERN     |
| MISS CASMAN            | EDITH CUTHBERT   |
| MR. IRETON             | JOHN R. COLLINS  |
| LADY BASING            | IRENE ROSS       |
| SIR ROBERT BASING      | TELFORD HUGHES   |

*Acts I and III: Lewis Davenant's House in Rockminster*

*Act II: Lewis Davenant's Country House*

*Time: In the Sixties*

*The Play produced by CLIFFORD BROOKE*



## ACT I

SCENE : *A room, half drawing-room, half study, in Lewis Davenant's house in Rockminster. Furniture eighteenth century, pictures, china in glass cases.*

*An April afternoon in 1860.*

*When the curtain rises Sebastian Dayne is seated at a table writing. Enter Martin.*

MARTIN. Mrs. Dayne, sir.

SEBASTIAN. Show her in. (*Exit Martin. A moment after Mrs. Dayne enters.*) Well, mother. (*She looks round for a chair.*) Let me get you a chair.

MRS. DAYNE. Are you busy, Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN. Not very ; finishing a chapter.

MRS. DAYNE. Then, perhaps, you can come to tea with me to Lady Thurlow's. I left her with your father ; he was reading his translation of—I can't remember the name.

SEBASTIAN. Theocritus?

MRS. DAYNE. Yes, that's the name. I couldn't listen to it any longer, so came on here to you. I could see they were both very glad to get rid of me.

SEBASTIAN. That's only your fancy, mother. But tell me, mother, did Lady Thurlow suggest any alternative readings?

MRS. DAYNE. Your father thinks very highly of her judgment.

SEBASTIAN. So do I, but Theocritus isn't her subject. . . . I don't know though, the second idyll. But, mother, what a swell you have come out to-day ! Lilac ribbons and a new silk jacket.

MRS. DAYNE. A pretty brown, isn't it ? Where is Lewis ?

SEBASTIAN. In his study.

MRS. DAYNE. He works very hard ; your father was saying to me only yesterday how hard he works.

SEBASTIAN. Much too hard for his secretary. I never get a chance at my poems.

MRS. DAYNE (*reproachfully*). Sebastian, you know you have every evening to yourself.

SEBASTIAN. But I want the day-time. This glorious day ! How it inspires one !

*In green underwood and cover,  
Blossom by blossom, the spring begins.*

MRS. DAYNE. Is that your own composition, Sebastian ?

SEBASTIAN. The same old question. If I write anything beautiful it is " Did Mr. Davenant help you ? Or did your father tell you how it should go ? " I never get credit for anything I do. There are the proofs of my poems on that table, but what is the use of publishing them ? As soon as it becomes known that I am Lewis Davenant's secretary the papers will begin to discover analogies, and our friends here will soon pick up the scent and will go streaming after it. I have learnt a lot from him,

no doubt, but the time has come to separate myself from him and from all literary influences. A long holiday is what I want.

MRS. DAYNE. But you will have a nice long holiday——

SEBASTIAN. You mean when Lewis goes to Germany to see his play performed? But will he go?

MRS. DAYNE. Of course.

SEBASTIAN. I am not sure of that. Lewis is a little world-weary, and he has seen so much and written so much that he has lost all taste, as he says, for general society, especially literary society. We were talking the other evening about this journey to Vienna, and the impression he left upon me was of one who would never be able to make up his mind to go. "It isn't," he said, "that I wouldn't like to see my play in German—I would, and the acting would interest me; but it is the proceedings that follow the play that I dread, the banquet and the laurel-leaves. Germans have no idea of art except somebody crowning somebody with laurel-leaves; generally a big fat woman does the crowning. And then all the *litterati* gathered about in my honour would make speeches about how art reconciles nations, how the fact of having German taught in schools will make England love Germany better, and how Germans by learning English in their schools will be able to arrive at a truer understanding of a nation, which, after all, is the same nation, for there is a great deal of Anglo-Saxon blood still in England; and after half an hour of this nonsense," Lewis said, "I shall have to get up and talk about

Shakespeare, saying that I have not come here to speak in my own name but in the name of English literature, of which I am an unworthy representative."

MRS. DAYNE. But your dear father often speaks like that at dinner about the study of the Latin and Greek languages.

SEBASTIAN. I suppose he does. . . . Lewis was very amusing the other evening, mother. What else did he say? Wait a moment, just let me think. Oh, yes. He said that after having spoken of Shakespeare he would have to explain the relations of art to nature. Yes, yes, that nature is something more and something less than art, that art is not nature because it is art, and that nature is not art because it is nature, and the stupendous creation of the artist is no less mysterious——

*Enter Martin.*

MARTIN. The gentleman in the dining-room, sir, says he will miss his train back to Southampton if he waits much longer, and wants to know if Mr. Davenant can see him now.

SEBASTIAN. I hope you told him that Mr. Davenant is composing?

MARTIN. Yes, sir. He asked me for the morning's paper——

SEBASTIAN. And you told him that we never read the newspapers here? (*Martin looks embarrassed.*) You gave him the book that we usually give to visitors?

MARTIN. Yes, sir.

MRS. DAYNE. What book is that?

SEBASTIAN. "The Koran."

MRS. DAYNE. That is what the Mahommedans read.

SEBASTIAN. Perhaps he has been to Constantinople.

MARTIN. He says he's a sailor, ma'am, second mate on board the *Hannah Maria*.

SEBASTIAN. You see how right I am, mother. A man who has come all the way from Southampton to see Lewis would like to read something serious.

MRS. DAYNE. Well, I suppose you know best; Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN (*to Martin*). If he rings again, tell him that Mr. Davenant will see him presently, in about ten minutes.

MARTIN. Yes, sir.

*Exit.*

MRS. DAYNE. What can a sailor want with Mr. Davenant? He isn't going to buy a yacht, is he?

SEBASTIAN. I wish he were; a yacht would get us out of this dreary hole. A sailor, more likely, who has read a description of a place he knows in one of Lewis's novels; Lewis has made some trivial mistake which the sailor would like him to correct.

MRS. DAYNE. Do you get many visitors here?

SEBASTIAN. Oh, yes, we get a tidy few: ladies who want Lewis to write plays for them; ladies from America who come to interview him. The last one we had here wanted to know his views on the influence of cats on domestic life. We get a fair number of translators from time to time: Swedes, Norwegians, Finns, Servians.

MRS. DAYNE. What an interesting life you have here, Sebastian !

SEBASTIAN. But people don't come to see me.

MRS. DAYNE. I am sure they are very nice to you, dear.

SEBASTIAN. In order to get something out of Lewis. There is no personal life for me in Rockminster. That is what I lack. I am tired of Rockminster ; nothing happens here. It is all right for Lewis ; he has had affairs with all kinds of women—not here, in London and Paris. Ladies in Rockminster don't have love affairs except perhaps——

MRS. DAYNE. I will not listen to scandal, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN. Therefore, every morning as I sit here I send forth my soul bidding it seek out some wonderful woman and give her my name and address—one whom I have never seen and never shall see—and in the evening I walk home hoping to get a letter from her. I know there isn't one, but I never fail to say, " Jane, are there any letters ? " Always the same answer, " No, sir," and I go upstairs to my room saying, " My soul has not yet had time to reach her."

MRS. DAYNE. My poor boy !

SEBASTIAN. But something must happen. This cannot go on for ever.

MRS. DAYNE. I hope if anything happens it won't be anything wrong, Sebastian. I am afraid you are a little overworked, a little over-strained. When Lewis goes to Vienna, which I trust he will, you

must go and stay with Lady Thurlow, who, I am sure, will be very glad to have you.

SEBASTIAN. But, mother, I have stayed with Lady Thurlow so often.

*Enter Lady Thurlow.*

LADY THURLOW. How do you do, Sebastian? He looks a little tired; don't you think so, Henrietta?—overworked. Here every morning at half-past ten, and no sooner is dinner over, the Professor tells me, than he goes to his room, and I have often seen his lamp burning in his window at midnight and after. I see proofs. Your proofs, Sebastian? If you'll allow me, I will just read your mother a few lines to show her what I meant when I said that your style was losing some of its clarity. Mr. Davenant's influence, an unfortunate influence.

SEBASTIAN. I beseech you, Lady Thurlow—I beg of you not to touch my proofs. I really cannot have them disturbed. And Mr. Davenant's manuscripts are there. You will oblige me by—Let me get you a chair. *He gets her a chair.*

LADY THURLOW. Thank you, Sebastian, but I've come to take your mother to tea. Won't you come with us?

SEBASTIAN. I am afraid I haven't time. I have got some most important work to finish, Lewis's play.

LADY THURLOW. Ah yes, his play which is going to be done in Vienna.

SEBASTIAN. But there are some letters . . . and post-time is not far off. I will go as far as the post office with you. Will you wait while I wash my hands? *Exit.*

LADY THURLOW. You see now, Henrietta, that things have come to a crisis.

MRS. DAYNE. A crisis, Augusta? What do you mean?

LADY THURLOW. I must speak to you about the influence that Mr. Davenant exercises around him. If Sebastian is to write original works——

MRS. DAYNE. If Sebastian is to write original works I suppose he'll write them.

LADY THURLOW. Then you don't fear Mr. Davenant's influence? Remember, Sebastian's talent is pastoral. I was speaking just now of his "Songs of the Hillside," and what atmosphere does he find here for his talent? Aubusson carpets and all the frivolity of the eighteenth century which Mr. Davenant has collected round him. I want to see Sebastian among the hills, in the solitudes, on the borders of the forests——

MRS. DAYNE. But you know very well, Augusta, that it was an unlooked-for good fortune for Sebastian to become the secretary of a writer known all over the world . . . and who is also our cousin. We have some money but we aren't millionaires, and if Sebastian hadn't failed in his examination he would now be following the same profession as his father.

LADY THURLOW. Sebastian a professor! Sebastian expounding Greek grammar! How could you think of such a thing, Henrietta? And so it was on account of his failure to pass his examination that you allowed him to become Mr. Davenant's secretary?

MRS. DAYNE. If he is Lewis's secretary it is because it pleases him and Lewis; and I wish, Augusta, you would not say those things to Sebastian about the woods and forests, for he is growing quite discontented. He was complaining before you came in about the dullness of Rockminster, that nothing happens here; and that every day he asks if there are letters for him; he is expecting that some woman whom he has never known will write to him.

LADY THURLOW. What you say doesn't surprise me. The other evening after dinner we were sitting together over the fire; he sat staring into it, and when I asked him of what poem he was dreaming he said, "I wasn't thinking of any poem, I was thinking what a brilliant past Davenant has had." He said it in a way that I did not like at all, as if he were envying Davenant. You see I was right from the first. Sebastian should never have become Davenant's secretary. Harm will come of it. Mark my words. *Sebastian appears in the doorway.*

SEBASTIAN. Are you coming?

LADY THURLOW. I suppose Mr. Davenant is still——

SEBASTIAN. Yes, he is still composing.

*They go out. Lewis Davenant enters by another door.*

DAVENANT. I heard voices. (*Going to the window.*) Lady Thurlow; I might have guessed it. The blue-stocking of Rockminster. Among stockings there is no such wanton as the blue. The colour was never to my taste. Long ago I preferred white;

and now the colour of stockings interests me no longer.

*Goes to the table. Enter Martin.*

MARTIN. Will you see Mr. Godby now, sir ?

DAVENANT. Mr. Godby ?

MARTIN. The gentleman who has been waiting to see you for the last two hours.

DAVENANT. But Mr. Dayne was here.

MARTIN. Mr. Godby said he wouldn't know anything about the business he has come upon. Shall I show him in, sir ?

DAVENANT. Yes; show him in. (*Exit Martin.*) Godby ? I don't remember the name. Oh ! how tired I am. What can he want with me ?

*Enter Martin.*

MARTIN. Mr. Godby, sir.

*Enter Godby. Martin goes out. Davenant is lying back in his chair like one overcome with fatigue. He passes his hand over his eyes and advances a step or two towards Godby.*

DAVENANT. I am sorry you have been kept waiting.

GODBY. It don't matter since I 'aven't to go without seeing you.

DAVENANT. But I'm told you have been waiting all the afternoon.

GODBY (*handing Davenant a book*). Secretary sent me this 'ere book to read. Thank 'ee.

DAVENANT (*taking the book*). The Koran !

GODBY. I asked parlourmaid for the paper, but she said you didn't read papers and that your visitors always read that book. (*Handing Davenant a box of Turkish Delight.*) A little present from

Priscilla, sir ; she wouldn't leave go of me till I promised to give it to you.

DAVENANT. A box of Turkish Delight !

GODBY. From Priscilla, my wife three weeks come Tuesday. So no more letters and pomes — that's what I've come to tell you.

DAVENANT. Letters ! Poems !

GODBY. We've 'ad enough of that kind of trash, and if Priscilla 'ad known what you be like you'd 'ave 'ad them all back.

DAVENANT. What I am like !

2 GODBY. Her notion of the author of—of “ Elizabeth Cooper ”—(O Lord, if she seed you now ! Ha ! ha ! ha !)—was a young fellow all scarfs and riding breeches. Bless you 'eart, I saw through yer when she read out the number of books you'd written. I says to 'er, “ Priscilla, it ain't possible. He be a man past fifty.” That's ten years older than myself, and when I tell you that she thinks me an old 'un, you can judge for yourself what she'd think of you ! Now let's get a good look at yer. All I told Priscilla is true : a man about fifty or fifty-two, the hair growing thin on the top and grey about the ears and in the whiskers, getting a bit bluff in the bows and broad in the beam.

DAVENANT (*laughing*). I think you are a sailor, Mr. Godby.

GODBY. Second mate aboard the brigantine the *Hannah Maria*, at your service. All the same, I must tell you that I think a man of your age could employ his time better than by sending letters and pomes to a girl like Priscilla.

DAVENANT. Mr. Godby, I know nothing of what you are talking about, absolutely nothing.

GODBY. Well, if you don't know 'er as Priscilla Godby, maybe you'd know 'er as Priscilla Jones.

DAVENANT. I don't remember ever having heard either of these names before.

GODBY. You won't deny your 'andwriting and your signature at the end of the letter. (*He fumbles in his pockets.*) I don't seem to 'ave them about me.

DAVENANT. Never mind, Mr. Godby. I think you told me that Mrs. Godby admired my writing?

GODBY. Ah, now we're beginning to understand each other.

DAVENANT. But the letters and poems you spoke of must have come from my secretary.

GODBY. Secretary!

DAVENANT. He answers my letters to correspondents who are not personally known to me.

GODBY. Now do 'e now? So all 'em letters and pomes aren't yours but secretary's?

DAVENANT. That is the only explanation I can think of. But allow me. (*He rings. Enter Martin.*) Martin, will you ask Mr. Dayne to come here for a moment. (*Exit Martin.*) I assure you I don't remember. Priscilla Jones? No, I don't remember anyone of that name. But what is the matter, Mr. Godby?

GODBY. I'm thinking 'ow Priscilla is going to take this 'ere news. What a squall! She'll be took aback all standing. It might 'ave been well to do a bit of teasing of her, about your age, telling 'er that you was grey like an old Tom in the whiskers;

but no, I can't bring myself for to tell 'er that all these letters which she 'as been a-treasuring up 'aven't been written by you but by secretary.

DAVENANT. But why tell her ?

GODBY. If one of these days ye was to run across each other ?

DAVENANT (*aside*). Sebastian, really; really this is too bad of you. (*To Godby.*) Perhaps, after all it would be better to make a clean breast of it.

GODBY. But if she won't give ear to me ?

DAVENANT. Now do you tell her that I am not only the ugly fellow which you have so admirably summarized in three or four telling touches, but an old curmudgeon who received you very uncivilly and told you that his house was filled with letters from all kinds of women, and that he would be only too glad to get rid of Mrs. Godby's, and handed you back the packet.

GODBY. A very good idea, Mr. Davenant. And now I see plain what a clever man you be.

*Enter Sebastian.*

DAVENANT. Mr. Godby has come for his wife's letters.

SEBASTIAN. Mr. Godby ?

DAVENANT. Priscilla Jones that was.

SEBASTIAN. Ah ! Priscilla Jones !

DAVENANT. Now, Sebastian, it appears that you have been carrying on a correspondence with Miss Priscilla Jones, and that you sent her poems, and all in my name. Really, Sebastian, really !

SEBASTIAN. But I told you that Priscilla Jones had written to you about——

DAVENANT. About "Elizabeth Cooper"? Very likely. . . . I am tired of hearing about that book.

SEBASTIAN. Don't you remember telling me to answer her?

DAVENANT. It is very likely I did tell you to answer her letter, but I didn't tell you to continue the correspondence.

GODBY. And the pomes. He sent her pomes.

SEBASTIAN. And the poems are what you fear, Mr. Godby? How long have you been married?

GODBY. Three weeks come Tuesday.

SEBASTIAN. Your fears of poems will pass away with time. This innocent correspondence, which afforded Miss Jones a great deal of pleasure while it lasted, ended the moment she told me she had decided to become Mrs. Godby.

GODBY. That's quite right, that's quite right.

DAVENANT. Well, Mr. Godby, suppose we let bygones be bygones? (*Turning towards Sebastian.*) Will you give Mr. Godby his wife's letters?

SEBASTIAN (*to Godby*). For some time past I have been in the habit of collecting the letters which Mr. Davenant has received from ladies with literary tastes. (*Crosses and returns with a casket.*) All the aristocracies of France, Germany, and Russia are represented in this casket. (*Opening the casket.*) Here are twenty-eight from the Duchesse de Mafrigneuse, twenty-three from Madame de Nucingen, two hundred and three from Madame Marneffe—quite a lengthy correspondence extending over many years; three from the Princesse de Cadignan, fifteen from the Marquise de Chaulieu, eleven from Madame

d'Espard ; and the casket itself was given to him by the delicious Madame du Val Noble, who contributes as many as——

GODBY. You pay out your jaw tackle and all them fine names come mighty easy, young man, but I don't 'appen to 'ear the name of Priscilla Jones among them. Now, if you'd be just good enough to see if you can find Mrs. G.'s letters at the bottom of that 'ere casket.

SEBASTIAN. Priscilla's letters, Mr. Godby ! Priscilla's letters in this casket ! We have several boxes downstairs. It would take days to look through the collection.

DAVENANT. And while he is looking out your wife's letters you will be missing your train. Leave your address, and we'll look out Mrs. Godby's letters and send them to you.

GODBY. Well, I don't know. I was told not to come back without them. (*Looking at the clock.*) Why, lor' ! it's five o'clock ! The time I've been here ! As yer says, I shall miss the train, so if you'll be so kind——

DAVENANT. You shall have your letters, Mr. Godby, without fail. *He rings the bell.*

GODBY. Thank ye, thank ye. (*Enter Martin.*) And I 'ave the 'onour to wish you good even', Mr. Davenant, and thank ye. If you ever wants anything in the farin' line, such as a parrot or what not, at yer service. *Exit with Martin.*

SEBASTIAN (*still before the casket ; he has taken out another packet of letters, which he shows to Davenant*). And these, the letters of the Countess Von Hoenstadt.

DAVENANT. Cease that fooling, Sebastian, and shut the casket.

SEBASTIAN. But why, Lewis? Something tells me that she is different from the rest.

DAVENANT. The Countess Von Hoenstadt? She certainly helped to get the translation of "Elizabeth Cooper" accepted in Germany; she has given herself a great deal of trouble.

SEBASTIAN. Don't think about your play, think about Gabrielle. I assure you she is worth thinking about.

DAVENANT. You don't even know who she is.

SEBASTIAN. Oh, but I do. She has told you all about herself in her letters: a Society woman, the widow of a count in Vienna. She has told you her age; a thing which the others rarely do, twenty-seven; we will put her down at twenty-eight, perhaps twenty-nine, which isn't old age, and I suppose she has had some love affairs; anyhow, she knows how to write love-letters.

DAVENANT. Yes, an original and an ardent soul, whatever else she may be.

SEBASTIAN. Listen to this. (*He reads.*) "I am tired of the rain and of myself, and of everything except you. I have never heard your voice, I won't see or hear you, for it would be a catastrophe to fall in love with the man in you; I will only be in love with the author." And you won't go to Vienna to meet the woman who can write such a charming letter as this?

DAVENANT. I don't say I won't go.

SEBASTIAN. No, you don't say you won't go;

you drift, you vacillate. If one is to live and enjoy life one must be whole-hearted. It would be a wonderful thing to meet a woman that one must risk everything for. Do you never wish, Lewis, to risk the cliff's edge ?

DAVENANT. Just fancy my careering over Europe in search of a love affair ! Going to meet a woman I have never seen, determined to love her. You don't expect me really to go to Vienna to meet Gabrielle. Not a bad name, Gabrielle Von Hoenstadt. Even when I was your age, Sebastian, I was not quite so reckless.

SEBASTIAN. If that is your attitude, perhaps you had better not go, but if you weren't you ! Oh, what a delicious adventure, what an extraordinary romance ! To go to Vienna, to travel a thousand miles for a woman, for an idea. It would be like the Greeks crossing the sea for Helen of Troy.

DAVENANT. I can see nothing in it, at least for me, but a journey full of nervous fear, apprehension, disappointment—a disastrous journey.

SEBASTIAN. Disastrous !

DAVENANT. A long nervous journey full of disquiet, full of uncertainty. What will she think of me ? What will she say ? I am alone in an hotel with nothing to think of except the clothes I shall wear. It is difficult to make a selection. Shall I wear a pair of check trousers, or shall I wear the striped ? Shall I wear a frock-coat or a morning-coat ? A jacket would be a trifle undignified, a frock-coat would be a little too formal. Perhaps a morning-coat would be the right thing. A morning-

coat, check trousers—no striped. A fancy waistcoat? No, better not. What necktie? Mauve? Purple? A black necktie? Then the boots. Most important. A woman always looks at your feet. At every moment my nervousness increases. Think of me listening for the step in the corridor of the hotel. Twenty disappointments! And then, at last, the door opens; she comes in. I look at her, she looks at me, and I read what is passing in her mind. I see that she is disappointed, that I am not at all the man she expected to meet. But we are on the stage and have to play the comedy out to the end, so we propose a visit to the picture gallery. I see that I am not at all the man she wants, but I must not show that she is not the woman I want. So I take her hand in the carriage, she withdraws it; and then we attempt some friendship, and after two days of torture I escape from Vienna leaving a letter containing some absurd excuse that I am called away suddenly on a matter of important business. That is the first possibility. You will not deny that what I've said is very possibly what might happen.

SEBASTIAN. Of course, it is always possible to look at things from a disagreeable side; but Gabrielle, on the contrary, might like you very much—in fact, I am sure she would . . . for a while.

DAVENANT. I might like her as a friend, but she might fail to inspire in me that exaltation of spirit of sense, which it is the ambition and the destiny of woman to inspire. That is the second possibility.

SEBASTIAN. But there is a third possibility—you might both love each other.

DAVENANT. Yes, there is that, and that would be the most disagreeable of the three. We might even fall in love with each other at first sight, or at the end of an hour and a half's interview. Then there would be the sitting in the box at the theatre, gazing at each other, and the dinners and drives when the fever called love——

SEBASTIAN. The greatest joy on earth.

DAVENANT. In different circumstances, yes ; but how could this love-story end ? At the end of the week I might say : “ Come to Paris ; let us travel.”

SEBASTIAN. That is exactly how I imagine it.

DAVENANT. Or I might ask her to marry me and come and settle down here ; she would probably refuse.

SEBASTIAN. She certainly would not like Rock-minster.

DAVENANT. Then I should have to bid her good-bye at the end of the week in Vienna. “ Dear Gabrielle, we have passed a charming week together ; I shall be passing this way again in a year or two on my way to Athens. I hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting you.”

SEBASTIAN. If you were to go to Vienna I am sure that something quite unexpected would happen, something quite different.

DAVENANT. You are twenty-five, I am fifty. Do you think it would be wise for me to begin all over again a life which is finished and well finished ? Love adventures are things that no man would be

without, not for all the world ; but to continue after fifty, if one can continue, would be to rob life of variety. Whereas by a little act of renunciation one creates a new life, quite different from the old.

SEBASTIAN. A sort of epicurean asceticism.

DAVENANT. That is it. A life in which the pleasures of others not only throw no shadow on us but uplift the heart. It is an adventure more suitable to your age and your appearance.

SEBASTIAN. Will you send me to Vienna ?

DAVENANT. Why not ? To look after my play, and peradventure to see Gabrielle.

SEBASTIAN. But of what use ? She is in love with your books, she is in love with your fame, she is in love with you because you are celebrated.

DAVENANT. I daresay there is a little of that in it ; but once in love with you, she will be satisfied with you and your charming book of poems which will be published in a few weeks.

SEBASTIAN. Lewis, I will confess the truth to you ; I have always been in love with her, I have never dared to say so before. Do you think she will be disappointed in me ?

DAVENANT. If she doesn't love you, somebody else will. In Vienna you are sure to be a success. Now, let me see. This is the third, no, the fourth of April. I will give you a month's holiday—five weeks if you like. For you, Sebastian, life and its pleasures ; for me the peace of Claremont Villa, long days spent in my garden, and in the evenings I will smoke my pipe with my old friend Ruskin—

a fair division. You will return enchanted in a month, and we'll begin work again.

SEBASTIAN. What a delicious adventure ! What a delicious adventure !

DAVENANT (*more and more amused*). Bravo, Sebastian, bravo ! It would not be like you to refuse. I will give you some money. (*He sits at the desk. Sebastian stands in the middle of the stage lost in thought.*) Here is a note of credit on my banker. The journey is an expensive one but it is really necessary . . . but one moment, Sebastian. You will have to travel in my name.

SEBASTIAN. Why ?

DAVENANT. Because you said just now that it was fame she was after. Go in my name and unite the two temptations, youth and fame. You will be irresistible.

SEBASTIAN. Introduce myself to Gabrielle as the author of " Elizabeth Cooper " !

DAVENANT. Why not, since I give you leave ? She would hardly love you if you went to her as my secretary.

SEBASTIAN. But I am a poet.

DAVENANT. A very charming poet, but——

SEBASTIAN. Forego myself ! Present myself as the author of all the books and plays you have written ! I couldn't do it, Lewis.

DAVENANT. Think of what you'll lose. An unique opportunity. If you aren't tempted, all I can say is that your generation is different from mine.

*Enter Martin. She has a packet in her hand.*

MARTIN. This packet has just come, sir.

*She hands him the packet and goes out. Davenant opens it.*

DAVENANT. Do you know what is in this packet ? A miniature. Gabrielle has sent her portrait and a letter.

SEBASTIAN. Let me see it, let me see it.

*Davenant hands him the miniature and Sebastian stands gazing delightedly at it. Davenant reads the letter.*

DAVENANT. Only a short letter. She tells me what trains I am to travel by and—listen, Sebastian. (*Reads.*) “ I won’t wait much longer. I am not ashamed to run after you, but I very soon will be ashamed of thinking so much of a man without even knowing if he deserves it. It makes me feel what I don’t want to be—a little fool.” You see, Sebastian, there is no time to be lost.

SEBASTIAN. She is delicious, delicious and divine !

DAVENANT. So you’re going ?

SEBASTIAN. I am going, come what may.

DAVENANT. You had better start immediately.

SEBASTIAN. No time shall be lost. Good-bye. Can I take the miniature ?

DAVENANT. Yes, here it is. And you’ll not forget altogether about my play, will you ? You’ll write to me at once and attend all the rehearsals ?

SEBASTIAN. Yes, yes. Good-bye, Lewis.

*He goes out. Davenant looks at one of his pictures, then opens the window and rings the bell. Enter Martin.*

DAVENANT. If you look through the telescope in

the library you will see Jupiter superbly. Then you can bring in the lamp.

MARTIN. Yes, sir.

*She goes out. Davenant remains at the window smoking as the curtain falls.*

## ACT II

SCENE : *Davenant's country house. A room opening out on a large garden. Light summer furniture. A river is seen in the distance. The sun is shining.*

*A month later ; about two in the afternoon.*

*When the curtain rises Davenant and Lady Thurlow are walking to and fro in the garden. Davenant carries a pruning-shears in his hand and is busy cutting roses.*

LADY THURLOW. My dear friend, you see my hands are full ; I beg of you not to cut any more.

DAVENANT. Just one more. *He cuts another rose.*

LADY THURLOW. What a beautiful rose ! Purple, almost black. And now I will bid you good-bye. I have already taken up more than an hour of your valuable time. I must run away.

DAVENANT. No, no. Come in and rest for a moment. You're tired. Come and sit down.

*He points to a sofa and sits beside her.*

LADY THURLOW. Before going back to Rockminster I want to pay a little visit to your neighbour Ruskin. You've no idea how impatient I am to read his "Stones of Venice." He has been working upon it so long.

DAVENANT. Ah, he is a past-master.

LADY THURLOW. But you, my dear friend, you haven't told me what you're doing.

DAVENANT. Very little.

LADY THURLOW. You miss Sebastian ?

DAVENANT. Indeed I do. I hope he will soon come back.

LADY THURLOW. When do you expect him ?

DAVENANT. I can't say exactly, probably in a day or two. I showed you the letter he wrote me from Vienna after the performance of "Elizabeth Cooper."

LADY THURLOW. No doubt you are very pleased to know that your play was such a success.

DAVENANT. It is always agreeable to hear that one has pleased somebody.

LADY THURLOW. And since that letter you haven't heard from him ?

DAVENANT. No, and I don't expect to ; he is busy seeing all there is to see. I told him not to hurry. I assure you there is no cause for anxiety. If any accident had happened to him, if he had been killed in a duel, or if he had been shipwrecked——

LADY THURLOW. There are other accidents besides duels and shipwrecks. If he were to get entangled in an intrigue with some actress at the theatre . . . and in a strange country ?

DAVENANT. I gave him a letter of introduction, and it should open some doors of Viennese society to him.

LADY THURLOW. Without for a moment thinking that Viennese Society might prove even more dangerous than theatrical.

DAVENANT. A young man must sow his wild oats somewhere.

LADY THURLOW. And it was to sow them that you sent him to Vienna ?

DAVENANT. I sent him to Vienna to look after my play.

LADY THURLOW. Never thinking that some Viennese actress——

DAVENANT. If one were to think of all the traps into which a young man may tumble, there would be no time to think of anything else.

LADY THURLOW (*rising*). I thought perhaps you might have had news through one of your friends.

DAVENANT. The moment I have I will let you know. Must you go ?

LADY THURLOW. I really must. Good-bye.

DAVENANT. Till this evening. Don't forget your promise to dine with me in Rockminster. You will meet some pleasant people, I think.

LADY THURLOW. One never meets anybody else in your house. I shan't forget.

*Exit by garden. Davenant goes out with her and comes back a moment after. He walks about the stage in silence.*

DAVENANT. What the devil am I to do with this irresponsible youth Sebastian ? Why didn't he write more explicitly ? He looks forward to telling me his adventures. . . . All the same, it is a month since he left.

*Enter Martin with a letter.*

MARTIN. Fletcher has just brought this letter, sir. It came yesterday to Rockminster, and knowing

that you weren't returning till this evening, he thought it better to bring it here.

DAVENANT. He did quite right. (*Takes the letter.*) Wait a moment. Sebastian's handwriting. (*He reads.*) This is too much! Really this is too much. (*After a pause he bursts out laughing.*) What a splendid impertinence! He even wants to turn me out of my own house. (*Reading by fragments.*) "My dear cousin, my dear Lewis, you are so good, so kind. Lend me Claremont Villa . . . only for two days . . . and as I am still Lewis Davenant, will you oblige me by becoming Sebastian Dayne? We shall arrive—" WE! "We shall arrive to-morrow." To-morrow. When did you say, Martin, this letter came?

MARTIN. Last night, sir.

DAVENANT. Then it's to-day. He may be here . . . they may be here at any moment. As this joke began with me, I had better see it through. (*To Martin.*) Now, Martin, listen to me attentively. I can count upon you, I think.

MARTIN. It wasn't yesterday I entered your service, sir, and you know—

DAVENANT. Yes, I know. But to-day, Martin, it isn't on my account, alas! We must make way for the young folk. Now, this is what you are to do. Mr. Dayne may arrive at any moment—and with a lady . . . I don't think I told you he is travelling in my name. Now, when he comes you are to call him Mr. Davenant. Do you understand? (*Martin begins to laugh.*) It would take too long to explain. You are to stay here to look after them.

And while they are here you are to speak to Mr. Dayne as Mr. Davenant. I think I can rely on you. Mr. Dayne will not stay longer than two days.

MARTIN. And you, sir ?

DAVENANT. I must get back to Rockminster. What time is the next train ?

MARTIN. The train from Rockminster has just come in and the train back has just gone out.

DAVENANT. Then they may be on their way from the station.

MARTIN. And if that is the case, sir ?

DAVENANT. Then, Martin, I am Mr. Sebastian Dayne.

MARTIN. Very well, sir ; I'll try to remember.

*Exit.*

DAVENANT. If I were to walk to Rockminster . . . only four miles. No, I am not going to walk four miles in the broiling sun for Sebastian's sake. I dare say they haven't come by that train. (*Going to the window.*) Yes, here they are ! Sebastian and a pretty woman, as far as one can judge. I wish she would raise her parasol a little more. But I must fly if I wouldn't meet them on the staircase or in the street. Now what is to be done ? Can it be Gabrielle ? It can't be.

*Enter Sebastian and the Countess Von Hoenstadt.*

COUNTESS (*speaking with a German accent*). What a lovely country ! And the delicious river, I love it ! And all this beautiful garden, this exquisite little cottage. It's all delightful.

SEBASTIAN. I am so glad you are pleased with the

place, Gabrielle. Most of my childhood was passed here ; I am very fond of it. And to come back here with you is a most extraordinary happiness.

COUNTESS. I love it all. And you, Lewis, I love you !

*Enter Martin : she relieves the Countess of her travelling cloak.*

SEBASTIAN (*going towards Davenant*). My dear Sebastian . . . how are you ? Gabrielle, allow me to introduce you to my cousin, Sebastian Dayne, also my secretary.

COUNTESS. Lewis has spoken a great deal about you, Mr. Dayne.

DAVENANT (*bowing*). Have you had a pleasant journey ?

SEBASTIAN. Very. We left all our luggage at Rockminster and came on here with just enough for two days. (*To Gabrielle.*) Dearest, I am sure you would like to go to your room. (*To Martin.*) What room have you ready for—for—madam ?

MARTIN (*hesitatingly*). The room——

DAVENANT. The room overlooking the river. I thought——

SEBASTIAN. That will do splendidly, that will do splendidly.

MARTIN. If madam will come with me.

GABRIELLE. I will leave you with your secretary for a little while. (*In a low tone.*) Dearest, I love you.

*Exeunt Martin and Gabrielle.*

SEBASTIAN (*after following Gabrielle a few steps, returns rapidly to Davenant*). You are good, Lewis. (*He takes both his hands.*) I don't know how to thank

you. I hope we haven't put you out too much? Only a couple of days.

DAVENANT (*in very good humour*). Not at all, Sebastian; stay as long as you please. I am delighted to see you, but must apologize for being here when you arrived. Your letter did not reach me until ten minutes ago, and I was just about to run away, having given Martin some instructions, when you arrived. But we have no time to lose. Tell me, and tell me quickly, is that Gabrielle?

SEBASTIAN. Didn't you know her? She is very like her miniature.

*He takes the miniature from his pocket and sits.*

DAVENANT. I hardly saw her, and in a hat. My dear Sebastian, you have managed this affair splendidly. Now, admit, wasn't it a good idea of mine to send you to Vienna? You appear very much in love with each other. One could see that from the way she turned to look at you as she went out. It is all delightful, delightful! I congratulate you, Sebastian. Show me the miniature. Yes, it is very like her. And now tell me everything in a few words.

SEBASTIAN. It would take too long.

DAVENANT. We have five minutes.

SEBASTIAN. You want to know how we met?

DAVENANT. Certainly.

SEBASTIAN. Well, in the most original way . . . in the train.

DAVENANT (*more and more amused*). No!

SEBASTIAN. I got into the train at Ostend; and within an hour's journey of Vienna; at a station

called—I can't remember the name, three ladies and a gentleman got into my carriage.

DAVENANT. One was Gabrielle ?

SEBASTIAN. At first I didn't recognize her, but it was she. She was returning to Vienna to meet me.

DAVENANT. To meet Lewis Davenant.

SEBASTIAN. To meet Lewis Davenant and to meet me.

DAVENANT. To meet Lewis Davenant, since it was me she expected, but to meet you since it is you she loves. But I beg your pardon. Go on.

SEBASTIAN. Well, three ladies and a gentleman entered my compartment. The gentleman had white hair, very distinguished-looking. He is an old friend of her family's ; Baron Von Allmen is his name. The two ladies, the Countess Bertha Von Maureg and the Baronne Studenberg.

DAVENANT. I see you already possess some knowledge of Viennese Society. I suppose you met these people afterwards ?

SEBASTIAN. Yes.

DAVENANT. Well, go on.

SEBASTIAN. I helped them into their seats. She thanked me in German, and seeing I was English she smiled. Then I looked at her more attentively, asking myself where I had seen her before, and not being able to remember. All of a sudden, at the end of ten minutes, an idea came to me . . . but I said to myself, " I must be mad ! " Every moment the train was bringing us nearer Vienna ; the Baron was explaining to the two ladies things I couldn't

understand, and I caught her stealing glances in my direction when she thought I wasn't looking.

DAVENANT. Magnetic influence !

SEBASTIAN. And all the time I kept asking myself, "Is it Gabrielle ?" You can imagine my feelings. Then I had an inspiration. Very quietly taking her miniature out of the pocket of my coat, I compared it with her. She was watching me and immediately she understood.

DAVENANT. Delightful !

SEBASTIAN. I saw her blushing, and all of a sudden, with an exquisite spontaneity and that delicious accent which you have heard, she said, "You are Lewis Davenant !" What answer could I make ?

DAVENANT. You were fairly caught.

SEBASTIAN. I assure you, Lewis, that during the journey I had thought it all out, and had decided to present myself to her in my own name . . . yes, come what might.

DAVENANT. But you hadn't time. You were taken by surprise, and in a moment it was too late.

SEBASTIAN. Before I had time to answer she introduced me to her friends—to the distinguished-looking Baron Von Allmen, the beautiful Countess Von Maureg, and the vivacious Baronne Studenberg. "Mr. Lewis Davenant, who has come to Vienna for the performance of 'Elizabeth Cooper.'"

DAVENANT (*laughing*). Destiny is stronger than we, Sebastian. I see the hand of destiny in that meeting in the train. But you seem very subdued.

SEBASTIAN. Do I ?

DAVENANT. A certain greyness in the eyes and about the mouth which I find difficult to associate with the hero of so charming an adventure.

SEBASTIAN. Five enchanted weeks !

DAVENANT. I suppose you saw her every day ?

SEBASTIAN. Of course. And when we didn't spend the evening alone we went into Society. She introduced me to all her friends.

DAVENANT. And you charmed them all. They invited you to their houses, routs, balls, and dinners.

SEBASTIAN. They were enchanted weeks !

DAVENANT. But I suppose sometimes you remembered my play ?

SEBASTIAN. Of course. I wrote you a long letter about it. Gabrielle always came with me to rehearsals.

DAVENANT. Tell me something about my play . . . about your play.

SEBASTIAN. Isn't it very difficult for an author to speak about his own work ?

DAVENANT. Well, tell me what Sebastian Dayne would have thought of the play.

SEBASTIAN. What Sebastian Dayne would have thought of my play. That is just what I was going to ask you. On the first evening of the performance when I was called before the curtain——

DAVENANT. You were called before the curtain ?

SEBASTIAN. Yes ; and I made a speech.

DAVENANT. And you told them that you had come to speak to them in the name of England ?

SEBASTIAN. Not on that occasion, but next day at the banquet——

DAVENANT. There was a banquet ?

SEBASTIAN. A magnificent one.

DAVENANT. Your health was drunk in champagne ?

SEBASTIAN. Of course.

DAVENANT. And you were crowned with laurels ?

SEBASTIAN. A crown of gilt laurels.

DAVENANT. Which you wore as an actor wears his crown ?

SEBASTIAN. An actor lays aside his crown at midnight.

DAVENANT. But yours was never from your brow. All night long you wore it, and you were still the author of "Elizabeth Cooper" when the morning dawned.

SEBASTIAN (*smiling*). I don't complain.

DAVENANT. But tell me, Sebastian. . . . I suppose now and then you must have had some unpleasant moments ? Every rose has its thorn. You must have said to yourself that the day would have to come when you must tell her. However, I suppose the proper time hasn't yet arrived.

SEBASTIAN. I keep putting it off.

DAVENANT. I understand . . . You went several times to her determined to tell her everything, but before you had time to open your lips she took your face in her hands murmuring, "I love you, dearest." What did she wear ? Rose ? How could you disappoint Gabrielle in rose ! Another time she wore a mauve scarf over her shoulders. I understand.

What resolutions would not vanish at the sight of a mauve scarf wound about two white arms !

SEBASTIAN. But you have not seen her arms.

DAVENANT. Arms soon to be withdrawn, my poor Sebastian, arms which have been for the last month wound about you. I hope you have grown a little weary of those arms ? No ? Not yet ? So serious as that ? (*Sits by him.*)

SEBASTIAN. Yes, Lewis. Every day I am more and more in love with her. And all the time the fatal day is approaching when I must tell her.

DAVENANT. She loves you for yourself ?

SEBASTIAN. I think so.

DAVENANT. But you have some misgivings.

SEBASTIAN. I dread the unpleasant quarter of an hour.

DAVENANT. If you get off with only a quarter of an hour you'll be lucky. Such happiness as yours is paid for more dearly. And now I must ask you what excuse you are going to give her for not telling her sooner ?

SEBASTIAN. There is no use thinking out what one is going to say. The stress of the moment puts the right words into one's mouth.

DAVENANT. But when will that moment come ? The sooner the better. You surely don't intend putting it off till she is seated in the train on her way back to Vienna, and when you hear the whistle put your head into the carriage-window saying, "I am not Lewis Davenant."

SEBASTIAN. I know I must tell her sooner or later. But we're not going to part like that.

DAVENANT. You will have to part this week or the next, I suppose . . . unless . . . do you intend to marry her ?

SEBASTIAN. We are married.

*Davenant up to this point has been very amused. He immediately becomes serious.*

DAVENANT. Married ! You have married her ? And you have married her in the name of Lewis Davenant ? (*Rises.*) My dear Sebastian, this is a piece of folly——

SEBASTIAN. We won't discuss that point. One's follies are too personal to discuss.

DAVENANT. You have married her in my name. You mean that you went through some ceremony of marriage ?

SEBASTIAN. No, the marriage was all right. There was a church, and a priest, and a book where we signed our names . . . but I'm not very well up in the marriage laws.

DAVENANT. Well, my good friend, you will soon have an excellent occasion to learn them.

SEBASTIAN. It would be better if you let me tell you how it all happened.

DAVENANT. The one thing that concerns me is that you have married her in my name . . . and I am not a marrying man.

SEBASTIAN. Try for a moment to imagine what my situation was.

DAVENANT. I am trying to think what could have made you do such a ridiculous thing, but I can't arrive at any conclusion.

SEBASTIAN. If you'll let me tell you. You'll only

lose time guessing. You didn't reproach me when I told you that in the train I allowed Gabrielle to introduce me to her friends as the author of "Elizabeth Cooper."

DAVENANT. In the train you were taken by surprise, but you weren't taken by surprise the morning you were married. You knew you were going to be married.

SEBASTIAN. I hadn't the faintest idea I was going to be married.

DAVENANT. Were you married under the influence of a drug, or in your sleep?

SEBASTIAN. I tell you that an hour before my marriage I hadn't the least idea I was going to be married.

DAVENANT. You speak as if you had been caught in a shower of rain.

SEBASTIAN. It was exactly like that. We went for an excursion to an island in the Danube, a long narrow island with a village running down the middle. A church appeared, and as we stopped to admire it Gabrielle said, "How would you like to come into that church and be married to me?"

DAVENANT. And weren't you able to answer her?

SEBASTIAN. No, I remained silent.

DAVENANT. And then she insisted?

SEBASTIAN. No, she didn't say anything more.

DAVENANT. And then?

SEBASTIAN. Then she went into the church.

DAVENANT. With you?

SEBASTIAN. With me. We found an old priest asleep in a chair.

DAVENANT. And then ?

SEBASTIAN. She asked him to marry us.

DAVENANT. And you never said a word ? Is that how people usually marry in Vienna ?

SEBASTIAN. Sometimes.

DAVENANT. Well, my dear friend, in England these marriages very often end in the Law Courts.

SEBASTIAN. A man should always be willing to suffer for the woman he loves. I am ready.

DAVENANT. To go to prison, to cut your throat ? If I had gone to Vienna this wouldn't have happened.

SEBASTIAN. Because she wouldn't have loved you.

DAVENANT. I'm not so sure of that ; after all, she did write those letters to me. But you must tell her who you are, and the sooner the better.

SEBASTIAN. You think, then, that the moment she comes downstairs I should introduce her to the real Lewis Davenant.

DAVENANT. Why not ?

SEBASTIAN. Perhaps you would like to explain to her ?

DAVENANT. Oh, no, my good friend. Tell her yourself, when you are alone with her. I did wrong to advise you to go to Vienna and introduce yourself to her in my name . . . but I didn't tell you to marry her in my name. Now, I am leaving in half an hour. You will have her all to yourself. You couldn't find a better place for the explanation—a beautiful house in the midst of a lovely

garden facing a river ; everything is in your favour. Ssh ! here she is.

*Enter Gabrielle. Her hair is pinned up in front but falls over her shoulders.*

GABRIELLE. You will excuse me, Mr. Dayne, for I did not know you were here and came to ask my husband to make my hair. I am *si maladroite* I am not able to make my hair alone, and darling, your parlourmaid is not used to attending on ladies.

SEBASTIAN. She has broken the comb I gave you.

GABRIELLE. The comb that you bought for me at Strasbourg. I am sorry. (*Sebastian arranges her hair.*) Is it unlucky in England, Mr. Dayne, to break a comb when you first enter a strange house ? I hope not. (*Gets up and goes to the mirror, and then comes back to Sebastian.*) Make it a little higher, dear.

SEBASTIAN. Sebastian, have you ever seen more beautiful hair ? Soft as silk, the colour of honey, and smelling as sweetly.

COUNTESS. Thank you, dear. (*Goes to the mirror again.*) If Martin had been able to make my hair as well as you, I should have begun to suspect that mine were not the first little she-feet (*looking at the carpet*) to tread these roses underfoot. Do you say "she-feet" in English ?

DAVENANT. We don't specify the sex ; merely feet. *He moves towards the door.*

GABRIELLE. No, you must not go, Mr. Dayne. There are a great many things I should like to ask you about. Are you not my cousin now ?

DAVENANT. So I am ; and your secretary if you should ever require one.

GABRIELLE. I will dictate to you in German ; I am sure you know German, Mr. Dayne ; and it will improve your German to gossip with me. Is gossip right ? How do you say gossip in English ?

DAVENANT. We say gossip.

GABRIELLE. Just as I have said ? I should like to gossip with you. Will you take a chair, Mr. Dayne, and gossip in English with me ? Now do stay and tell me——

DAVENANT. What would you have me tell you ?

GABRIELLE. Of the advice you gave to Lewis that he must be beware of Viennese ladies, for I am sure you told him that in all those hours that you spent together.

DAVENANT. When your miniature arrived——

GABRIELLE. Lewis says that the miniature does me no justice whatever, and he is right. I always look dreadful and *affectée* or swollen and greedy on photographs. I do not look so toothachish in reality, do I, Mr. Dayne ? But I am not going to ask you for compliments ; I know you could not do else than tell me that I am very pretty, but that is not what I want to hear. I should like you to tell me if the lady in the ivory is a woman who would deceive her lover and what terrible revenge she would wreck on him if he were to deceive her. You don't know ; how could you be expected to know ? You see, Mr. Dayne, I am a little stupid sometimes, but I like me to be like that. Pay not attention to me but just go on thinking of what is

in your head. Your head is full of Lewis's books, is it not? It must be since you are his secretary. We were talking about my miniature, and I was about to tell you that it was painted when I was living with my husband. He carried me off from the convent to a castle in the forest where I never saw anyone but an old nurse and *les chasseurs*, men that came to hunt the wild boar and the deer. It was very tedious but very romantic, like your Shakespeare. I used to sit at my casement thinking that it was a play of his and myself Desdemona; but she loved her black man and I did not love my hunter, who never knew a day's illness until he died. That was what his great friend that shot him used to say, "Rudolph never knew a day's illness till he died." It was an accident, and I will tell you how it happened one of these days, when I am rested, for it is a very long story.

SEBASTIAN. Darling, let me persuade you to go to your room and lie down for a little while.

GABRIELLE. I am not tired, but I cannot tell the accident that my husband met with while hunting in the forest. It sounds too much like William Rufus, and I want to talk about "Elizabeth Cooper." After my husband's death in the forest I went to live in Vienna, and seeing the same people day after day began to tire me almost as much as the deer and the boars in the forest. It was impossible for me to see them any more, and so I said to myself, "I will make some new acquaintance," and went to the library and began to pick out English heroes from Tauchnitz' edition. I found

Douglas, Richard Feverel, later on Chandos, and a thousand more, and one day the librarian handed me "Elizabeth Cooper." The name struck my imagination; it is such a wonderful name, so romantic, so—I can't say all I want to say in English. *Ach!* it is so tiresome. Elizabeth Cooper is so——

DAVENANT. So evocative.

GABRIELLE. So evocative of Shakespeare and English glens. (*To Sebastian.*) Why did you not give me the word I want? Thank you, Mr. Dayne. If Lewis had written a book for Austrian countesses especially, he could not have succeeded better. For weeks I wanted to write to him, but somehow I didn't care, and when his first letter arrived my hands turned as cold as ice and my cheeks burning hot. Is it not a funny thing to have cold hands and a hot face at the same time? A moment after I made gambols and pinched my dog because I was so happy. Tell me, Mr. Dayne, was Lewis really a little pleased when I first wrote to him? Did he tell you his first idea about me? I shall never forget what great impression his first letter made on me. I got it November 7, on a Saturday. Nearly every year something happens to me on November 7. It is a dangerous day for me.

DAVENANT. The Countess speaks exactly as she writes.

GABRIELLE. So Lewis has shown you my letters. No, don't trouble to excuse yourself, Lewis; I don't mind in the least your having shown my letters to Mr. Dayne—in fact, I knew you'd done so.

SEBASTIAN. How did you know that?

GABRIELLE. Well; my darling, didn't you tell me so one day ?

DAVENANT. If I may dare to put a question——

GABRIELLE. Do put questions to me and I will answer them truthfully.

DAVENANT. Were your imaginations fulfilled ?

GABRIELLE. I did not imagine so young a man.

DAVENANT. And if he had been an older man ?

GABRIELLE. I think I should have forgiven him his age for the sake of Elizabeth.

DAVENANT. Is " Elizabeth Cooper " the only book by Mr. Davenant that you have read ?

GABRIELLE. The only one ; I glanced through the others at the library, and the husband in one story—I have forgotten the name of it—seemed to me to be a darling. He took his wife upon his knee. Other authors' husbands are not doing such sweet, natural things. They are either beasts or *poseurs* or hypocrites. Oh ! I have no patience with them. I wish I could throw something to their heads ! But I did not buy any more of Lewis's books. I grew afraid they might have disappointed me, and I don't like to be disappointed, Mr. Dayne. It gives me nerves. When you know me better you will understand how bitterly I resent being disappointed. But I know " Elizabeth Cooper " so well, every scene in it, and I should have visited all the places he has described, only there were reasons that kept me in Vienna. The man who shot my husband was said to be in love with me, which was not true, and my family—but there is no necessity for going into that story now ; another time, Mr.

Dayne. I want now to talk to you about Elizabeth Cooper. It was she who gave me my liberty from Vienna, and so I said to my husband, "We must visit all the towns where she and her lover stayed at on our wedding journey; we shall follow her wanderings"; and so we went down the Rhine.

SEBASTIAN. Castle and crag, crag and castle.

GABRIELLE. On to Maintz, to Cologne, Bonn. It required all my persuasion to get Lewis to Paris. At last he consented, but on condition that he was to pretend he had never been there and that I was to show it to him.

DAVENANT. A most ingenious idea. I hope you took him to Fontainebleau?

GABRIELLE. Yes, and read him his description of the forest in the forest.

DAVENANT. How charming that must have been!

GABRIELLE. How he loves France!

DAVENANT. Yes, yes.

GABRIELLE. He says that whoever seems a little more distinguished than another has been to France.

SEBASTIAN. Quite true; we go there like rag-pickers, with baskets on our backs and crooked sticks in our hands.

DAVENANT. France is the van-bird and European countries the flock that struggles after.

GABRIELLE. Living together, you two have caught each other's accents and modes of thought.

DAVENANT. I sometimes think we have, only in me the note is fainter. And having visited Paris, you came on here.

GABRIELLE. Yes, to the country that Lewis has

described ; to-morrow we shall visit the hill-top where Elizabeth used to sit looking into the languid distances.

DAVENANT. I see ; that is why you came to Rockminster.

GABRIELLE. How quick you are, Mr. Dayne ! Lewis, how lucky you are to have a secretary like Mr. Dayne !

SEBASTIAN. I agree with you, Gabrielle, very lucky ; but I must ask Martin to get some tea. It must be nearly four o'clock.

DAVENANT. He brought you to Claremont Villa instead of taking you to Rockminster because he wanted to show you the room in which " Elizabeth Cooper " was written.

GABRIELLE. Is this really the room in which you wrote " Elizabeth Cooper," darling ? Why didn't you tell me the moment we came in. There is the table at which you wrote, the chair on which you sat, the inkstand into which you dipped your pen. And your manuscripts ? Where do you keep your manuscripts ? I want to see them.

*She goes to the table, pulls out the drawers, and takes out a heap of papers.*

SEBASTIAN. My dear, you mustn't upset those papers.

GABRIELLE. Why shouldn't I see the manuscript of " Elizabeth Cooper ? "

SEBASTIAN. What good ? You have read the book.

GABRIELLE. But I want to see the manuscript of the book that made me love you. Mr. Dayne, do

look, will you ? Try to find me the manuscript of "Elizabeth Cooper."

SEBASTIAN. We have no manuscript here, Gabrielle, I assure you.

GABRIELLE. Then I will look at your books. (*She gets up on a ladder that is standing beside the book-case.*) There is the three-volume edition and the six-shilling edition and the two-shilling picture board, and there—why, there is *l'édition de luxe*. I had no idea you had written so many books. Darling, how old were you when you began to write ?

SEBASTIAN. I think I was about sixteen.

GABRIELLE. And you are now five-and-twenty.

SEBASTIAN. I shall soon be seven-and-twenty.

GABRIELLE. And in ten years you have written seventeen books ! How very extraordinary ! Now which of these is your first book ?

SEBASTIAN. My first book was a volume of poems.

GABRIELLE. I am disappointed ; I cannot tell you, Lewis, how disappointed I am.

DAVENANT. The Countess hoped to inspire a great literature, and finds that literature already written.

GABRIELLE. I had no idea my husband's works were so voluminous—seventeen volumes before——

DAVENANT. He is seven-and-twenty, and will not stop at seventeen volumes.

GABRIELLE. Do you think I shall be able to inspire him, Mr. Dayne, to write more books ? I want him to write something that no author has yet quite done to my satisfaction—a story about a married couple, but a long, beautiful, might-be-true

story. Is might-be-true a real word; Mr. Dayne? Well, you and Lewis must try not to be envious when I invent a new word. You see; I don't want the husband to be a saint, nor the wife to be an angel; I just want them to be man and wife; to quarrel as well as to kiss, to have temptations both. But the end must be a happy one, Lewis; I don't want the Kreutzer Sonata over again. And on some children I must insist.

DAVENANT. How many?

GABRIELLE. I don't know how many—perhaps none at all when the story comes to be written. You see, I am always changing my moods and opinions, Mr. Dayne. It is amusing and fatiguing too; it is like changing one's dress a dozen times a day. But must you really leave us? Lewis, shall we go to the station with Mr. Dayne?

SEBASTIAN. If you want to, dear.

GABRIELLE (*coming down the steps*). Well, let us get our hats. We shall not be a moment, Mr. Dayne.

*Exeunt. Davenant replaces the books, and a moment after enter Lady Thurlow.*

LADY THURLOW. Forgive me, Mr. Davenant; for intruding once more, but is it true what I hear, that Sebastian has returned? My coachman tells me that he saw a lady and gentleman walking from the station toward Claremont Villa, and that the gentleman looked very like Sebastian. (*Catching sight of sunshade.*) I beg your pardon, I am sure, but I thought you were alone. This sunshade—It cannot be that Sebastian has brought back a

woman from Vienna with him? And if he had been guilty of such imprudence, you, Mr. Davenant, I know would not sanction——

DAVENANT. He has come back, but he isn't here. He will be in Rockminster a little later. And now, Lady Thurlow, let me beg of you to come at once, for I have to see him there, and if I stay another moment I shall miss the train. You will excuse me?

LADY THURLOW. Let me drive you back. My carriage is at the door.

DAVENANT. Let me see; but there is no time for thinking. Yes, Lady Thurlow, you shall drive me back. (*Exeunt. Davenant is heard outside.*) So very kind of you. *Enter Sebastian and Gabrielle.*

GABRIELLE (*looking round*). But where is that dear Mr. Dayne? Did I say anything very shocking, darling? something that frightened him away? He not even dared to bid me good-bye. One of my friends say that he never knew a lady who talked such dreadful things as I do, and my eyes look so innocently all the while. You must run after Mr. Dayne and bring him back, for my walk must not be spoiled.

SEBASTIAN. I don't know where to run, and I am not in the habit of running after my secretary. Martin will tell us. *He rings the bell.*

COUNTESS. He wouldn't go away without leaving a message for me. You heard me tell him, did you not, that I hate to be disappointed? (*Enter Martin.*) Can you tell me quickly if Mr. Dayne has gone to the station to get the train? Or has he

gone to the garden to gather me some flowers? How nice of him, for men so seldom like flowers.

MARTIN. Lady Thurlow called, your ladyship, and Mr. Dayne has gone back to Rockminster with her in her carriage.

COUNTESS. We must pursue them in another carriage.

SEBASTIAN. My dear Gabrielle! Thank you; Martin, that will do. *Exit Martin.*

GABRIELLE. Is Lady Thurlow Mr. Dayne's mistress? But that cannot be, for you told me, darling, that Mr. Dayne was no longer as fond as he used to be of *la femme de trente ans*. Such a *malchance*! just as I was beginning to be one in the full sense of the word. Or did Mr. Dayne take Lady Thurlow away because she loves you? Isn't that the business of secretaries as much as writing? It used to be in the Middle Ages. Was Mr. Dayne afraid I should make a scene? I don't make scenes, not as you in England; I merely cry, and then my nose gets swollen and I have hardly any eyes. You will not make me cry, darling, by being unfaithful to me? But of what are you thinking? Of some woman that you have loved a little bit? Tell me the truth, dear, and I will forgive you, if it was long ago and if she was not very pretty nor very young; middle-aged I should prefer it, but not dead, for the dead have a power that the living ones have not. You didn't desire her, and leave her with a baby which you will ask me to adopt. That I should not like doing—no, never, so please don't ask it. But why, darling, are you making such

naughty nostrils? You remind me of my husband that was, and though we are married you said you would always be my lover.

SEBASTIAN. I am thinking, Gabrielle, that— Gabrielle, there is nobody in the world for me but you, and if I am anything at all to you will you follow me who have followed you for the last three weeks, journeying from town to town?— a whimsical literary idea of yours, but I put up with it all for your sake. Now, Gabrielle, will you put up with a little for my sake?

GABRIELLE. But, Lewis, what do you want me to do?

SEBASTIAN. Questions are clouds, and there should be no clouds in the beautiful blue heaven of June.

GABRIELLE. Darling, what you say is poetical, but there are always clouds in the English sky.

SEBASTIAN. Then let us go back to Germany. We were happy in Germany—anywhere away from Rockminster. Here I am surrounded with relations and friends. Let us go back to those quaint Rhenish towns and to the time when I used to sit at your feet and tell you the story of my life. Let us go back.

GABRIELLE. But you have told me the story of your life.

SEBASTIAN. No, no, not all of it.

GABRIELLE. We cannot go away without luggage.

SEBASTIAN. Our luggage can follow us.

GABRIELLE. Then there are your letters and business with Mr. Dayne. *Ach!* why did Mr. Dayne go away like this?

SEBASTIAN. You were interested in him the moment you came into the room. The most capricious woman in the world, like the wind that blows, the thistledown in the air. Men are your amusement, your pleasure; the old succeed the young and the ugly the beautiful. You said you had hot finger-tips the moment you met me in the railway train, and when you came into the room and saw Mr. Dayne——

GABRIELLE. No, I had not hot finger-tips. I like Mr. Dayne because his eyes are kind and his teeth are so nice, and he would have amused me for the afternoon.

SEBASTIAN. Go to Rockminster after him and amuse yourself. But before you go I must tell you——

*Enter Martin.*

MARTIN. Mr. Godby, sir.

*Enter Godby.*

SEBASTIAN. Godby! Well, it is better so, for I might never have found courage to tell you.

GABRIELLE. To tell me what?

SEBASTIAN. To tell you that——

GODBY. Excuse me, ma'am, but you see I've been up after these letters afore now, and one can't keep running up from Southampton again and again after a packet of letters, to say nothing of Priscilla nagging at me.

GABRIELLE. I am afraid I don't understand.

GODBY. No more did Mr. Davenant. You see, it ain't possible for me to go back to Priscilla a second time without them letters, and they promised to let me 'ave them the last time I was 'ere.

GABRIELLE. What letters?

GODBY. Why, the letters 'e wrote to Priscilla . . . before she and I was spliced. You see, ma'am, it wasn't the fault of the young gentleman, it was Priscilla what commenced the correspondence over having read one of his books. I 'ave forgotten the name. Give me a moment.

GABRIELLE. "Elizabeth Cooper" ?

GODBY. That was the book that fair turned 'er 'ead, and 'e sent her heaps of letters and pomes. And now that she 'as become Mrs. G. she has been worrying of me to get her letters back. She's afeard he might publish them ; she says you never know what these literary gents will do with letters, and this is the second time I 'ave come up from Southampton after them.

GABRIELLE. Was there a poem beginning "After many days, and after many years ?"

GODBY. Well, ma'am, I can't say, though she 'as read them to me often enough. You see, I 'ave no head for poetry. "After many days and after many tears," yer say. There were plenty of tears in the pomes and sighs and 'earts and kisses.

GABRIELLE. Thank you, Mr. Godby, that's all I want to know. Now I'll leave you to settle your business with this gentleman.

*She goes towards the door.*

SEBASTIAN. Gabrielle, I can explain.

GABRIELLE. I prefer to listen to Mr. Dayne's explanations. *Exit.*

SEBASTIAN (*looking at his watch*). There is a train in a few minutes. She'll just catch it. I must run.

GODBY. Ah no, you don't, not till I gets Priscilla's letters.

SEBASTIAN. But they are in Rockminster, my good man. Let me go.

GODBY. Not if I knows it. We'll go back to Rockminster together.

SEBASTIAN. If you run we can catch the train.

GODBY. Run ! I likes to 'ear you talk about running, and to a man who 'as walked all the way from Rockminster. This be the 'ottest day we've 'ad this summer. Run, indeed !

SEBASTIAN. Let me go, let me go.

GODBY. Pull that bell and ask your parlour-maid to bring me up a glass of ale.

SEBASTIAN. There isn't time for drinking ale.

GODBY. Out of this I don't stir till I gets it.

*The train whistle is heard.*

SEBASTIAN. There ! We've missed the train. (*He rings the bell. Enter Martin.*) Martin, will you bring a tankard of ale and two glasses ?

*Martin goes out looking very astonished.*

CURTAIN

## ACT III

SCENE : *Same as in Act I.*

*When the Curtain rises Davenant is on the stage in evening dress. Enter Sebastian and Godby.*

GODBY. 'Ere we are, the very room—'member it jush as if it was yesseday. Beg pardon, sir, Godby, second mate on the *Hannah Maria*. Don't you remember Godby, sir ? Came for Priscilla's letters 'bout month ago.

DAVENANT. Yes, Mr. Godby, I remember.

GODBY. Well, to make a long story short, shecktery breaks his word ; no letters. Priscilla getting more and more peevish every day ; no letters. 'Ave to come up again from Southampton. Shecktery 'broad, self at Claremont Villa. Way I go, all sails set, and over'aul shecktery with his young lady ; bit of a squall. Shecktery would 'ave weighed anchor and gone away after her, but I says, " No, shecktery, no shecktery, not this time ; we go back together after a bit of a rest and a tankard of ale, at your expense, Mr. Davennen. Fine ale : drunk yer 'ealth, Mr. Davennen. Terrible 'ot day !

DAVENANT. I can see, Mr. Godby, that you are suffering from the heat. Won't you sit down ?

GODBY. I'd like to drop my anchor somewhere.

*He sits down on a light chair. Davenant rushes forward.*

DAVENANT. You'll be more comfortable in this chair, Mr. Godby. *Puts Godby into an arm-chair.*

GODBY. Thank 'ee. Very comfortable chair. But the letters in that 'ere casket.

SEBASTIAN. No, Mr. Godby, Priscilla's letters are downstairs.

GODBY. Downstairs. I'll wait 'ere. Shecktery . . . letters . . . shecktery good sort. D'ye 'ear, Mr. Davenant? Shecktery good sort.

*He closes his eyes. Davenant and Sebastian walk aside.*

DAVENANT. Now, Sebastian, what is all this about?

SEBASTIAN. Martin let this man into the house and we have been coming back ever since, from ale-house to ale-house.

DAVENANT. A drunken man in this house and an Austrian countess in Claremont Villa. These eccentricities are no doubt very amusing; Sebastian, but I shall have to explain to your father——

SEBASTIAN. Explain what you like; I don't care; I'm done for.

DAVENANT. Is it so bad as that? You have told her, and——

SEBASTIAN. Just as I was trying to summon up courage to tell her, this fellow came rolling into the room asking for the letters that I had promised to send him. At the word letters Gabrielle began to grow suspicious, and the garrulous fool that he is,

thinking to make matters right, said I hadn't written to Priscilla since they were spliced. What did Gabrielle care whether it was before or after marriage? All that concerned her was the fact that I had sent the poems that I had written to her to this fellow's wife. As soon as she knew that she just gave me a look. You wouldn't believe that so much hatred could come into that face. She picked up her parasol and ran away.

DAVENANT. And you let her go without an explanation?

SEBASTIAN. As I was about to follow her—is that fellow asleep?

DAVENANT. He seems as if he were.

SEBASTIAN. He gripped me by the arm and hung on to me, and a few minutes after I heard the train whistle.

DAVENANT. And she went away still thinking that she is married to me? You really must go and tell her.

SEBASTIAN. I don't know where she is.

*Enter Fletcher with a letter, which he hands to Davenant and goes out.*

DAVENANT (*reading the letter*). She is at the "Three Kings" and asks if she can see me at once; for she is leaving Rockminster to-morrow morning. You must go and tell her.

SEBASTIAN. Now? At once?

DAVENANT. Why not?

SEBASTIAN. Lewis, it's a terrible thing to tell a woman you have married her under a false name.

DAVENANT. But she loves you.

SEBASTIAN. Even so. Lewis, will you be the greatest friend a man ever had? Don't ask me to go and tell her—not here, not in Rockminster; that is what I dread. She is coming to see you. Ask her to let me go away with her, and I promise you I will tell her everything as soon as we are ten miles from here.

DAVENANT. Do you think you will ever be able to summon up courage?

SEBASTIAN. I'll have to.

DAVENANT. And will she forgive you?

SEBASTIAN. Whether she does or doesn't, she must be told. But will you do what I ask you, Lewis? Give me one more chance, I beseech you.

DAVENANT. I will write her a note. Will you ring the bell? (*He sits down and scribbles a note.*) Now, what name am I to put to the end of the note? You see what you are letting me in for. The note must be signed. My handwriting and your name. (*He signs his name. Enter Fletcher.*) Will you have this note sent round to the "Three Kings" at once?

FLETCHER. Yes, sir.

*Exit.*

SEBASTIAN. Thank you, Lewis, thank you. And now nothing remains but to wake up our visitor.

DAVENANT. But how are we to get rid of him? He won't go without the letters.

SEBASTIAN. I know where they are. (*He goes over to Godby.*) Now, Mr. Godby, shake your leg, lift your leg.

GODBY (*waking up*). Aye, aye, Captain, aye, aye. Blesh my soul . . . blesh my soul, where am I? (*Getting to his feet.*) Misher Davennen. Shecktery.

Long walk. 'Eat of the sun. Arlright. Come back for Priscilla's letters. (*Holding out his hand.*) Shecktery, Priscilla's letters.

SEBASTIAN. Priscilla's letters are downstairs; Mr. Godby.

GODBY. Very well ; get away close hauled. Cargo on board, Priscilla's letters. A glass of ale; Mr. Davennen, before starting. Glass of ale does no man any harm.

DAVENANT. You'll give Mr. Godby a glass of ale in the parlour, Sebastian.

GODBY. Thank 'ee, captain ; drink yer 'ealth. Fine ale in this country—besh ever drunk. One glass at "Three Fiddlers," should 'ave been two ; two glasses at "Pig and Whistle," should 'ave been three ; four glasses at the "Rose and Crown," should have been five. England's bulwarks is 'er ale : as long as England brews the ale that I 'ave drunk to-day England will never be anythin' else but Merrie England. (*Begins to sing.*) "Oh ! for Merrie England and the merrie days of yore."

SEBASTIAN. Come away and we'll drink Mr. Davenant's health.

GODBY. Yesh. Misher Davennen's 'ealth, Priscilla's 'ealth, shecktery's 'ealth, everybody's 'ealth. (*Sebastian helps him out. Coming back.*) Wonch you join us, Misher Davennen ?

DAVENANT. Presently, Mr. Godby, presently. (*Godby goes out.*) I shall expect you back to dinner, Sebastian. (*Returning into the room.*) This joke of mine seems to be no joke at all ; I am getting very tired of it. Instead of asking her to stay to

dinner, I find myself obliged to beg her to go away with Sebastian and without her dinner.

*He rings the bell and walks across the stage. Enter Fletcher ; he stands waiting for Davenant's orders.*

FLETCHER. Yes, sir.

DAVENANT (*waking up*). About the dinner. How many are you expecting ?

FLETCHER. You mentioned eleven, sir ; you weren't certain about Mr. Dayne.

DAVENANT. Mr. Dayne is coming to dinner, and I suppose you want to know how to place the people. Here is a card. (*He goes over to the writing-table and takes a card from it and hands it to Fletcher.*) The gardener sent the flowers all right ?

FLETCHER. Yes, sir.

DAVENANT. I told him to send some carnations. And Mr. Ireton is coming. He does not drink champagne ; you had better have a bottle of the best claret warmed for him.

FLETCHER. Very good, sir.

DAVENANT. I remember too that Sir Robert Basing likes Nepaul pepper. You had better put the little pepper-pot that we use in front of him.

FLETCHER. Yes, sir. You'll excuse me, sir, your necktie has been crumpled in the tying. I will fetch you another.

*He goes out. Davenant looks in the glass.*

DAVENANT. Yes, I have tied it rather badly. That drunken fellow coming in at the moment. (*Enter Fletcher with another tie. Davenant ties it before the glass.*) I think that is better.

FLETCHER. Yes, sir, that is quite all right. Is there anything else ?

DAVENANT. No ; the rest of the service is as usual. *A bell rings.*

FLETCHER. I think that is the front-door bell. Teresa has let a lady in, sir. Are you at home to anybody ?

DAVENANT. Yes, I am expecting a lady.

*Exit Fletcher ; he returns a moment afterwards followed by Gabrielle.*

FLETCHER. The Countess Von Hoenstadt. *Exit.*

GABRIELLE. I hope you aren't very cross with me, Mr. Dayne, because I have come to see you before dinner, but you don't dine till eight and I felt that I must speak to you—have you all to myself ; for you see I have not seen you alone yet, Mr. Dayne. But don't look so serious, as if you thought me a bore.

DAVENANT. My dear Countess, whatever else one might think, no one can think you a bore.

GABRIELLE. That is such a comfort. But if you don't think me a bore, why did you run away in that rude fashion from Claremont Villa ? The moment I left the room away you went with Lady Thurlow.

DAVENANT. I had to come back to finish some work, burning the midnight oil.

GABRIELLE. I am sure you will die very soon if you go on writing from morning till night. Why do you do it, dear Mr. Dayne ? Really, I must scold you a little. I do not want you to fall ill. You may write four or five hours every day, but no more, and you must go for long walks. If I were

living in this house I should send you out for two hours everyday at least, and in this room I should like heaps and heaps of flowers and some cushions. How long have you been without cushions, dear Mr. Dayne?

DAVENANT. I'm afraid you don't like your house.

GABRIELLE. My house? I had forgotten. Is the house really mine? And everything in it? All that lovely china. My house is a little like a museum. Well, let's imagine we are in a museum. Take me round, show me the pictures. Ah, here is a portrait of yourself. How very like you! I am glad your hair is grey and I am glad you have nice moustaches. It is so fortunate that they are not drooping like OO. That would be dreadful. You have what I call a horse-face. My face is like a cat's. When was the portrait done?

DAVENANT. Only two years ago by a rising young artist, John Everett Millais, the leader of the pre-Raphaelites.

GABRIELLE. I hope you will not expect me to talk clever things about pictures and statues; I can't do that, and why should I? I like beautiful things, but vulgar ones I hate. I have always been like that. I remember when I was a little girl of six or seven the Bibliothèque rose I was very fond of, but some of the pictures shocked me dreadfully. Madame Fichini falling *à la renverse* and exhibiting her dreadful *mollets* was too much for me. I took the book in a corner *pour effacer* the shocking things with an eraser. I am not trying to copy Elizabeth, but I have scruples sometimes; only about ugly things. In Venice I saw lovely statues;

there was especially one which I liked to look at—Leda with a swan. Do you like statues of Leda?

DAVENANT. There is one by Michael Angelo——

GABRIELLE. Ah, he was a stern man and did not make her hold her swan gracefully in her arms like the Venetian.

DAVENANT. Perhaps not. His statue is in Florence. Have you been to Florence, Countess?

GABRIELLE. No. Have you, Mr. Dayne?

DAVENANT. Yes.

GABRIELLE. What a pity! I suppose you bought some of those pictures in Italy.

DAVENANT. I have never had money to buy pictures. These are Lewis's.

COUNTESS. But he doesn't care for pictures. When we were in the Louvre——

DAVENANT. You were always between him and the pictures. Some of this china is mine. Here are a few bits of Bow and Chelsea, our imitations of your Dresden, and here is a piece of jade.

GABRIELLE. How very pretty! You know how badly he treated me?

*She walks about with the piece of jade in her hand. Davenant watches her, fearful lest she should drop it.*

DAVENANT. I have heard what happened at Claremont Villa.

GABRIELLE. Has he been here?

DAVENANT. He came here with Mr. Godby. Let me relieve you. (*He takes the piece of jade and puts it back in its place and returns to her.*) They arrived here very tired after a long walk, having stopped at

all the ale-houses on the way, Lewis Godby's prisoner and Godby gleefully drunk.

GABRIELLE. Can you be drunk gleefully? I suppose you can. You make me laugh in spite of myself, but I am in no laughing humour. It was horrid, disgusting; it was cowardly, wicked; it was everything that one can say in English, and if you knew German I would tell you heaps and heaps of words.

DAVENANT. But, my dear Countess, as I understand the matter, the quarrel between you and Lewis is only about a poem.

COUNTRESS. If he had published the poem I would not have said anything, but it was sending it to another woman, that is what has annoyed me, and has made it impossible for me ever to see him again.

DAVENANT. That seems a little unreasonable, Countess; one woman inspires the poem, all women receive it.

GABRIELLE. In print, not in manuscript.

DAVENANT. Before print there was manuscript. Laura inspired Petrarch's sonnets, but they were circulated in manuscript. We need only go back a little. Lewis's methods are archaic; that is the worst that can be said of them.

GABRIELLE. You are indulging, Mr. Dayne, in what we call on the Continent *marivaudage*, but I am serious.

DAVENANT. You really mean you will never see Lewis again?

GABRIELLE. Never; on that I must insist.

DAVENANT. Not even when you are an old woman?

GABRIELLE. Everything will be different then, but not for years and years to come.

DAVENANT. That seems rather sad, doesn't it, Gabrielle? I beg your pardon, but the name is so beautiful and I have seen it so often at the end of your letters.

GABRIELLE. You can call me Gabrielle if you really like it so much. I shall not be offended. When I was born they saw at once that I wasn't a boy and they were disappointed, as a son was wanted. They called me Gabrielle because they think in Austria that when a girl is called Gabrielle the next child will be a boy.

DAVENANT. It is very kind of you to grant me the privilege, and be sure that I shall not abuse it, only in private.

GABRIELLE. Why in private and not in public?

DAVENANT. Lewis would not like it.

GABRIELLE. Why do you talk to me about him? If I didn't like you very much, Mr. Dayne, I should——

DAVENANT. My dear Countess, Gabrielle, he is your husband.

GABRIELLE. I am obliged to you for reminding me of a disagreeable circumstance. I thought to find in you a sympathetic friend, and wished to talk to one who would soothe my nerves, and instead of that you have done just the opposite. You don't like me. Good-bye, Mr. Dayne.

*She goes up the stage towards the door. Davenant follows her and brings her back.*

DAVENANT. No, no, you mustn't go like that.

I am sorry I have failed to understand you. Come back, and in five minutes we shall be friends again.

GABRIELLE. You will not talk to me about him ?

DAVENANT. No, not a word since you don't wish it.

GABRIELLE. You'll talk to me about yourself, and exclusively ?

DAVENANT. Yes, exclusively.

GABRIELLE. Well, then, I will come back. But I don't think I can listen to you as I should like to listen to you. You see, you have upset my nerves.

DAVENANT. And you want a little mattress and a soft warm little coverlet for each of your nerves.

GABRIELLE. Now you are quoting from my letters.

DAVENANT. Come, sit down beside me.

GABRIELLE. Have you ever been to Vienna, Mr. Dayne ? You have been to Germany, I know.

DAVENANT. Not further south than Bavaria.

GABRIELLE. One of these days you will come to Vienna, and if you do you will knock at my door . . . and you will let me know beforehand, for it would be too dreadful for words if you came and Gabrielle had left. You never would get consoled, I hope ; nor would I. But you mustn't come in the winter ; it is always raining then, and Vienna is so dirty when it does, but in the spring it is lovely.

DAVENANT. I will come in April. Is April too early ?

GABRIELLE. I would like you to come in February, because then my freckles are less visible and furs are becoming.

DAVENANT. Yes, so they are, the furs and the freckles too.

GABRIELLE. But I freckle under my ears. See ?  
*She shows him her neck.*

DAVENANT. The freckles render a beautiful neck still more desirable (*she draws away*) by their naturalness. You are going to remain in England for the summer ?

GABRIELLE. No, I am going abroad at once, to Paris first and then to the seaside—to Dieppe, Trouville, or some tiny little fishing village. Etretat I have heard of—a little village where you can bathe without anybody seeing you, which is what I like, for it gives me *des crampes* of every kind to think of anybody seeing me rising out of the sea in a—do you say sea-gown ?

DAVENANT. No, we say bathing-gown.

GABRIELLE. And you say well, for a more unbecoming garment never was invented, exaggerating all one's little roundnesses.

DAVENANT. I used to bathe long ago in Etretat with the French painters.

GABRIELLE. Why not return ? Ah, no, I must not ask you, though you are a very sympathetic Mr. Dayne.

DAVENANT. I might go abroad in the autumn, and in Italy we might meet, in Venice——

GABRIELLE. It would be nice to meet you in Venice and to sit in a gondola looking at the moon and listening to that noisy Italian music that would be dreadful elsewhere, but in Venice one likes it, and you could tell me your troubles holding my hand.

DAVENANT (*going to her*). Countess, is this a promise ?

GABRIELLE. Why shouldn't we meet in Venice ? Everybody meets in Venice.

DAVENANT. But you said to hold your hand.

GABRIELLE. You can hold my hand now, Mr. Dayne.

DAVENANT. Remember that I am but flesh and blood ; I might lose my head so completely in Venice——

GABRIELLE. Are you afraid to finish your sentence ?

DAVENANT. I might ask you to love me, Countess.

GABRIELLE. Does one ask ?

DAVENANT. I suppose not. Gabrielle——

*He takes her in his arms.*

GABRIELLE. We aren't in Venice yet. (*He holds her.*) No, no, you mustn't kiss me.

DAVENANT. If I may not kiss you, why do you ask me to meet you in Venice ?

GABRIELLE. I don't know.

DAVENANT. Don't say you don't know. A woman always knows.

GABRIELLE. I swear, Mr. Dayne, that I don't know why

DAVENANT. Why did you come here ?

GABRIELLE. I don't know, an impulse ; I am full of impulses. You must let me go. And now, Mr. Dayne, why did you want to kiss me ? Remember, one always knows.

DAVENANT. Quite true, but I'd like to tell you first why you asked me to meet you abroad.

GABRIELLE. Did I ask you ?

DAVENANT. Have you forgotten already ? And I am not surprised if you have. You are angry

with Lewis and you came here with the intention of revenging yourself.

GABRIELLE. And lacked courage. You may be right. And now, since you are so clever, will you tell me why you wanted to kiss me ?

DAVENANT. I wanted to prove to you that you love your husband, and I have proved it.

GABRIELLE. Because I refused to kiss you I love my husband ? I did not expect to find you so conceited.

DAVENANT. You mean that you don't believe a man could be so disinterested. Well, I admit that your mirror——

GABRIELLE. I am in no humour for *marivaudage*.  
Where is Lewis ? *Enter Sebastian.*

DAVENANT. My news so far as it goes is good news. I have succeeded in persuading the Countess that she loves you, though of course you have behaved very badly.

SEBASTIAN. Gabrielle, you have forgiven me !

GABRIELLE. Mr. Dayne says that one woman inspires the poem and all women receive it, so I suppose I must be satisfied.

SEBASTIAN. My whole life will be devoted to you from this hour ; I will explain to you in the train. One leaves in half an hour ; we shall just catch it.

GABRIELLE. Catch a train ! But we have been catching trains and missing them for the last three weeks.

SEBASTIAN. At Claremont Villa I asked you to leave this place.

GABRIELLE. You want me to go back to Claremont Villa ?

SEBASTIAN. Much farther than Claremont Villa; out of this country.

GABRIELLE. But, Lewis, you must have jumped out of your senses. What is the matter with him, Mr. Dayne? Now that I have forgiven him he wants to drag me away, out of my own house and before I have had dinner; my guests eating while I am starving.

SEBASTIAN. We can get something to eat at the railway-station, and Sebastian can stay and entertain your guests. I assure you these people don't matter. Nothing matters in Rockminster. Come, Gabrielle, come.

GABRIELLE. But what would everybody think? It would seem as if I were flying away from your relations, and I am most anxious to see the relations of the man I have married. Perhaps they will not like me at all; if so, it would be better for me to see them and then never come back to Rockminster.

SEBASTIAN. But you aren't dressed for dinner; I want them to see you in that beautiful dinner-dress which suits you so well.

GABRIELLE. That dinner-dress would only scandalize your relations, who cannot be expected to hold the same views as you do, Lewis. I think this is a very suitable dress in which to appear before them.

SEBASTIAN. It is cruel of you to refuse. What new caprice is this? (*Pause.*) You aren't in love with Sebastian, are you?

GABRIELLE. I am in love with Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN. Gabrielle!

GABRIELLE. I am in love with the Sebastian that came to Vienna, and I like very much the Sebastian

whom I met here and who brought us together, told us to kiss and make friends as skilfully as if he were writing a lover's quarrel in one of his books. (*She bursts out laughing.*) Dear Mr. Davenant, you, the great psychological novelist, you didn't think that I believed Sebastian wrote all these books? Sebastian, how could you have fallen in love with a woman whom you believed to be such a fool? Two such clever men, a poet and a novelist. *Ach!* it is very sad, the saddest thing that has ever happened to me in my life.

DAVENANT. So you knew all the time that Sebastian had not written "Elizabeth Cooper"! But in the train you said, "You are Lewis Davenant."

GABRIELLE. He was looking at my miniature and for the moment——

DAVENANT. You were deceived. But what an enchanting deception! You should thank me, Countess, for having spared you what you wrote for and sent you what you desired.

GABRIELLE. I would kiss you for Sebastian if I were not afraid of making him jealous. Am I again on the verge of naughtiness? I am afraid I am, but you both deserve it. But you have not told me, Mr. Davenant, if you are sorry that you did not come to Vienna. Would you have been disappointed in me? You can tell me better now, for before you had only seen me in the ivory. But you need not answer; you don't know, and I puzzle you.

DAVENANT. If I had gone to Vienna you would have missed the comedy which you seem to have played divinely well.

GABRIELLE. Your comedy, Mr. Davenant.

DAVENANT. Mine, but into which you introduced a marriage.

GABRIELLE. I have always said that I should invent marriage if it had not been invented long ago ; and the day that I invented Sebastian's was such a beautiful day and the church looked so lovely, the spire showing between the trees and the air smelling of lilac. Has Sebastian told you of the old priest that we found asleep in a chair, and who would not marry us for a long while because we had no papers to show ? I cried and turned away saying, " What sins I may commit, father, I dedicate to you." And then he——

DAVENANT. I suppose there is nothing to do but to laugh, only it is rather difficult to laugh all of a sudden.

GABRIELLE. Sebastian isn't laughing. Sebastian, what is the matter with you ?

SEBASTIAN. I suppose you thought I was too stupid to write any of Lewis's books.

DAVENANT. Now, Sebastian, we can't have any more quarrels to-night. Look upon yourself as the most fortunate man in the world. Fellows like you always get out of their scrapes. (*The clock strikes eight.*) Eight o'clock ! My guests will soon be here.

GABRIELLE. May Sebastian take me to your room and make my hair for me ? Come, darling.

*Exeunt Gabrielle and Sebastian. Enter Fletcher.*

FLETCHER. Lord and Lady Thurlow.

*Enter Lord and Lady Thurlow.*

LADY THURLOW. The Professor and Henrietta

are dreadfully alarmed about Sebastian and this woman who calls herself the Countess Von Hoenstadt.

*Enter Fletcher.*

FLETCHER. Professor and Mrs. Dayne !

*Enter Professor and Mrs. Dayne.*

MRS. DAYNE. What has happened to my poor Sebastian ? Augusta has frightened us.

PROFESSOR. We would like to know if he is married . . . legally, you understand.

DAVENANT. They were married, I believe, on an island in the Danube by an old priest who was found asleep in a chair. Quite a Shakespearean marriage.

Yonder is a hermit's cell.

Hermits sleep lightly ; a knock will awaken him,

And faithfully we twain shall be united  
Ere the eastern sun flames like a daffodil  
Amid the rooky woods.

PROFESSOR DAYNE. No other pen but his——

LADY THURLOW. Forgive me, Mr. Davenant, but I think it shows a lack of feeling on your part to joke about a matter that is so serious to us all. Just at the present moment when his book of poems is published ! People are saying all sorts of things—that you knew her very well, that she is an old friend of yours, and that you sent this poor boy to her.

DAVENANT. A man cannot be sent to the woman he loves ; he goes to her in spite of himself.

LADY THURLOW. People think very badly of your conduct. I know for a fact that Lady Kingsweight won't come here to-night.

DAVENANT. Is she ill ?

LADY THURLOW. No, she is shocked ; and of course Mr. Ireton, as our member, couldn't come. He has to consider his constituents.

DAVENANT. Well, the last thing I heard was that his constituents were considering him.

LADY THURLOW. He is a serious-minded man. And as for Sir Robert and Lady Basing, I don't mind telling you that they are not coming. I have come because I hate to be a deserter and also I must see poor Sebastian. Whatever happens, I must stand by him. Oh, how could you have done this ?

*Enter Fletcher, followed by Lady Kingsweight and Miss Casman.*

FLETCHER. Lady Kingsweight and Miss Casman !

LADY THURLOW. Well, she has come after all. I am surprised. But Mr. Ireton was speaking of the matter this evening, and he could not understand, he said, how a man of your experience——

*Fletcher enters, followed by Mr. Ireton.*

FLETCHER. Mr. Ireton !

LADY THURLOW. Well, he has come after all.

LADY KINGSWEIGHT. A most remarkable story, Mr. Davenant, a most remarkable story. This comes of love at first sight. I believe it was all through seeing a miniature. Do let me see the miniature of the lady who inspired this passion.

*Fletcher enters, followed by Sir Robert and Lady Basing.*

FLETCHER. Sir Robert and Lady Basing !

LADY BASING (*shaking hands with Davenant*). Robert told me not to ask you, but I will. I must beg you to tell me this strange romance about

Mr. Dayne and the Countess Von Hoenstadt. Now, if the lady had met you, Mr. Davenant.

DAVENANT. She might not have loved me at all.

IRETON. The "Encyclopædia Britannica" notes several cases where the unknown have addressed distinguished authors with results leading to marriage or . . . similar relationships.

*Enter Sebastian and Gabrielle.*

SEBASTIAN. My mother, Gabrielle.

MRS. DAYNE. My dear child !

*She opens her arms. Sebastian continues the introductions.*

PROFESSOR (*to Davenant*). My daughter-in-law appears to be an exceedingly charming woman.

DAVENANT. I am so glad you are pleased. And now I must tell you who you are to take down to dinner.

*He takes the Professor over to Lady Basing.  
Enter Fletcher.*

FLETCHER. Dinner is served, sir. *Exit.*

DAVENANT. Mr. Ireton, will you take Mrs. Dayne down ? and Sir Robert, will you take Lady Kingsweight ? and you, Thurlow, will you take Miss Casman ? Sebastian, you go down with Lady Thurlow.

*Davenant goes to Gabrielle, and the guests go out two by two. Sebastian and Lady Thurlow are the last to leave the stage.*

LADY THURLOW. He is laughing at us. It is a subject of a joke with him, of farce, of comedy, but for me it is the end of my life.

CURTAIN







